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ABSTRACT

To make some of the effective schools research known to parents, this chapter reviews case studies of schools with low socioeconomic status children whose achievement is higher than expected. The three most important characteristics of the effective schools in the cases studied were found to be discipline, leadership, and structured attention to basic skills. Discipline was found to be the most common characteristic, present in every effective school. Leadership, from the principal, superintendent, or curriculum materials, was most effective when it nurtured in both children and teachers the idea that the school day matters. The basic academic skills were best learned when an explicit decision had been made that the teaching of these skills is the mission of schools, and when the skills were taught using a detailed, structured strategy. (DCS)

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Looking at Some Research on What Makes an Effective School

Thomas R. Ascik

In the 1982 case of *Pauley v. Bailey*, a state court in West Virginia effectively abolished the public school system of that state by declaring that the system of financing it unconstitutionally discriminated against poorer school districts. The court required that a master plan be developed that would completely redesign every aspect of the school system. According to the state superintendent of schools, the master plan has relied on "current research to define an effective school, an effective principal, and an effective teacher."[1] In 1979, New York City and Milwaukee were among the first of our major cities to initiate large school-improvement projects based on the line of education studies known as "effective schools research." A recent study by the Education Commission of the States[2] reported that a majority of the states are preparing or already carrying out school-reform projects that have been largely inspired by research on effective schools.

Clearly, these are influential times for education research. But, while "effective-schools research" is widely

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known in the twin worlds of education research and education practice, few parents, whose children are already or soon will be directly affected by changes based upon it, have even heard of these studies. It is the purpose of this chapter to review some of the work in effective-schools research.

Some preliminaries are necessary. Historically, there has been a gap in academic achievement between children coming from largely white middle- and upper-income families and children from low-income families, a great disproportion of which are black. This fact is perennially one of the major issues in American education. Numerous government programs, e.g. Chapter 1, Compensatory Education Headstart, have been created to counteract it. The findings of the famous 1966 Coleman Report, namely, that its causes were more related to family background than to the effects of schooling, cast a pall over educators who thought that schools could overcome the adverse academic effects of family environments where there was no tradition of learning. Effective schools research has been an attempt to lift that pall. It has been based upon the hypothesis that if schools could be found where achievement of low-SES[3] children was higher than could be expected, then it would be worthwhile observing, examining, and describing the important characteristics of such schools.

Research and writing about effective schools has been criticized for being concerned too much with second-hand interpretation and not enough with original research.[4] This chapter is confined to review of original research, and the only works examined are those based on the "case-study" method—that is, based on detailed descriptions of schools. Excluded is research in which the author emphasizes conclusions and interpretations based on what he saw but shortchanges the reader on the observations themselves. All the authors included here do have their own interpretations, but those interpretations are not considered below. Not all effective schools research emphasizing the case-study method could be considered because of limitations

of space. Additionally, the last two works included here, both by journalists, are not normally regarded as formal research by the research community. They are included because they are detailed case studies and because, it was thought, the technique of keen observation is as highly developed in the craft of journalism as it is in social science.

Inner-City Children Can Be Taught to Read

In 1971, George Weber, Associate Director of the Council for Basic Education, launched the line of study now known as effective schools research with the publication of his study *Inner City Children Can Be Taught to Read: Four Successful Schools.*[5]

Weber's work consisted of case studies of four inner-city schools which met his three criteria: 1) a non-selective public school in the central part of a large city attended by very poor children; 2) third-grade reading achievement at a national grade norm score as a median; and 3) a low percentage of gross reading failures.

P.S. 11 in Manhattan enrolled a student body of 750 children (a recent decline from 1200) in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade of whom 50 percent were Puerto Rican and 17 percent black, and of whom 80 percent qualified for free lunch. The school had been selected to participate in a special school-improvement program, More Effective Schools, five years previously. Smaller classes, heterogeneous grouping (as opposed to homogeneous grouping or "ability-tracking"), supplementary teachers specializing in reading, extra supervisory and auxiliary personnel (e.g. three assistant principals), and pre-kindergarten classes were the main features of the More Effective Schools program. Weber identified the principal, who was involved in every detail of the operation and organization of the school, as the source of the obvious order and purpose about the school. Additionally, without any single reading program being prescribed, there was a school-wide emphasis on early reading achievement, phonics instruction, homework, and individualized diagnostic testing and instruction.

Finally, individualized instruction was only one aspect of school-wide high expectations and concern for every pupil.

The John Finley Elementary School, also in Manhattan, enrolled 980 students in kindergarten through sixth grade, almost all of whom qualified for free lunch and of whom 70 percent were black and 30 percent Spanish-speaking. Weber's own summary paragraph describing the school's success can serve us here: "Five features of the reading program stand out: all of the pupils are started in the same way in heterogeneous classes in the first half of first grade; individualization and grouping on the basis of reading progress begins in the second half of the first grade; careful and frequent evaluation is done by someone outside the classroom; a very large quantity and variety of materials is used; and phonics, both implicit and explicit, is taught in the first two grades. This planned, precise reading program benefits from a general school atmosphere that includes high expectations, a concern for every child, and considerable home involvement through homework and home-school communications."[6] It should be added that in his complete description of the school Weber attributes the good school atmosphere largely to the order, confidence, and optimism provided by the principal of eleven years' tenure.

The Woodland School, a nearly 100 percent black school in Kansas City, enrolled 650 students (from a recent high of 1200) in kindergarten through seventh grade almost all of whom came from very poor families. The most important reason for the success of Woodland School seemed to be its participation in Project Uplift, a program initiated by the dynamic, reform-minded school superintendent, Robert Wheeler, who came to his job determined to improve reading achievement by emphasizing beginning reading skills. This program included reading and speech specialists in each school, teacher aides, re-training of teachers ("because staff expectations about pupil potential had to be raised"),[7] and the Sullivan Programmed Reading Series, published by McGraw-Hill, a highly structured, highly disciplined course of individualized self-paced instruction

designed so that a student advanced only after mastering his current material. Classes at Woodland were relatively large, and, within grades, classes were roughly grouped by reading achievement. According to Weber, the school's success could be attributed to the emphasis on reading, high expectations for the students, and the use of the Sullivan materials; although, with regard to those materials, Weber insisted they "can be understood only in terms of the spirit and objectives"[8] of the larger Project Uplift. Interestingly, Weber thought that special, compensatory education classes were, on balance, "a negative factor."

At the Ann Street School in the center of Los Angeles, there were 406 very low-income students in kindergarten through sixth grade of whom 62 percent were Mexican-American and 38 percent were black. There were two reasons for the success of the school. The first was a schoolwide emphasis on reading as carried out by the Sullivan Reading Series, already described; some attention to phonics; and "the excellent and imaginative work of the reading specialist."[9] The second was the leadership of the principal whose arrival at the school four years previously had marked the starting point of the school's improvement. She accomplished the improvement in two stages. As Weber puts it, "Her first problem, as she saw it, was to establish order in the building and to create a level of discipline that would facilitate learning. Having accomplished that, she turned to the curriculum."[10]

Overall, the liability of Weber's work is that, except for a rather peculiar table aggregating the reading scores of all four schools together, he provides no proof (i.e. data) of the successful reading achievement of the four schools but, instead, expects the reader to take his word for it.

Schools Can Make A Difference

In 1979, sociologist Wilbur Brookover (*et al.*) published his work on effective schools, *School Social Systems and Student Achievement*,[11] a substantial part of which contained descriptions of case studies of four low-SES schools. Because Brookover was primarily interested in observing

and describing "school climate," the case study method of research was a necessity, for "the way in which a given climate is developed and the way in which students, teachers, and principals become socialized in it are questions which cannot be answered through . . . statistical analysis."[12] Brookover chose four low-SES schools, two all-black and two all-white, all in Michigan. At two of the schools, the average achievement scores were higher than the scores normally associated with such schools. The other two schools had more predictable scores. Instead of identifying the schools, he simply listed them as White A, Black A, White B, Black B.

White A was a comparatively high-achieving school located in an all-white, stable suburban community largely homogeneous in social background and class. With all of its students living nearby and many walking to school, and with active community use of the school building for non-school activities, it seemed a throwback to the classic notion of the neighborhood school. To account for the success of the school, Brookover zeroed in on the principal, various behaviors of the teachers, and certain academic practices. The principal emphasized his role as instructional leader and made unannounced visits to each teacher's classroom at least thirty times a year. With regard to the teachers, the time spent in the classroom was well-organized so as to maximize instruction and to minimize noninstructional activities. The teachers exhibited high expectations for the students, did not "write off" any student as unable to learn, constantly reinforced the morale of the students, and used competitive team games as teaching tactics. At White A, ability-grouping (tracking) was confined to within-classroom grouping only in the subject of reading and only in the first three grades. To Brookover and his team, the most important element in the success of the school was the willingness of the teachers and principal to accept personal responsibility for student achievement.

The students at Black A, another school where achievement was higher than could be predicted for low-SES children, came from a predominantly black community

located on the fringe of a large metropolitan area. Brookover's first and continuing impression of the school was of discipline and order. For instance, he was struck by the principal's admonition to the teachers at a faculty meeting about the importance of establishing a climate of discipline from the moment the students entered the building. All the faculty and staff cooperated at all times, both in the classroom and without, in maintaining the climate of discipline and order. In fact, Brookover was somewhat surprised to discover that student behavior and discipline, not student achievement, was the most prevalent topic of conversation among the faculty. As in White A, there was a great deal of engagement—and few noninstructional activities—during classroom time. Achievement grouping existed at Black A, and each classroom was divided into three such groups.

Brookover found that the teachers rarely gave up completely on any student even when they realized that out-of-school factors were severely hampering learning. Instead, the overall climate of the school was one of high expectations for all students. Morale of the teachers was high because of the mutual, committed support they gave to each other and because parents were supportive. The principal at Black A was rated very high as an administrator, but his view was that teachers are primarily responsible for the quality of education in a school. By contrast, the previous principal of four years was very much an instructional leader, and much of the faculty felt that the relatively high achievement of the school was the result of his efforts.

White B was an all-white, low-SES school where students were low-achievers, that is to say, their achievement scores were at the level predicted by their SES. As such, White B was in sharp contrast to White A where the achievement scores were high despite the low social status. From his observations of the school, Brookover arrived at five conclusions to account for the low scores. First, there was a great disparity among different classrooms in the amount of time spent on instruction. The good teachers seemed to spend 80 percent of class time on instruction, but the worst teachers only 10 percent, according to Brookover's reckon-

ing. Disorder in the classroom was not always the cause of wasted time, for Brookover's research team observed one fourth grade teacher who kept good order during class but who had students doing "seatwork" predominantly, with little direct instruction or assistance coming from the teacher. Second, teachers did mentally "write off" some of the slow learners who, as a consequence, seemed left out of instructional activities. Third, there was an almost unanimous belief among the teachers that the possibility of academic achievement is controlled by a student's background. To these teachers the low achievement scores of the school were understandable. Fourth, Brookover thought that ability-grouping practices were too rigid because of little upward movement out of the low group. Fifth, the principal seemed aloof from both students and teachers and did not emphasize his role as instructional leader.

The situation was much the same at Black B, a low-SES and low-achieving school with a predominantly black student body. Teachers either failed to keep order in the classrooms or merely kept students "busy" rather than engaged in instructional activities. Again, "writing off" students was prevalent with a significant percentage of the faculty attributing low-achievement to poor family background. Brookover observed that teacher efforts to build students' morale were often counter-productive, with excessive praise given to substandard work rather than constant encouragement to bring work up to standard. Ability grouping might have been too elaborate at Black B with constant disruptions in classrooms caused by students moving between rooms in order to be with different groupings at different times. Finally, the principal seemed to be a capable administrator, had a good rapport with teachers, was firmly committed to discipline, and considered academics her top priority. Yet, Brookover faulted her for believing too much in family background as the determinant of school achievement and for not giving enough of a sense of urgency and direction in academics.

Why Do Some Schools Succeed?

Phi Delta Kappa, the national education fraternity, publisher of *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine and numerous other publications in education, conducted a study of "effective schools" that led to its 1980 book *Why Do Some Urban Schools Succeed?*[13] The volume included case studies conducted by various research teams of eight exceptional urban elementary schools.

At Washington Park Elementary School (grades K-6) in Cincinnati, Ohio, 92 percent of the students were from low-income families, and 70 percent were black. The research team selected Washington Park because of steady gains in reading and mathematics achievement over a four-year period.

According to the team studying Washington Park, by far the most important element of the school was its remarkable, indefatigable, enthusiastic principal, Roger Haynes. Here was the prototype of the "effective principal." He established a climate of fair and expeditious discipline and took every opportunity daily, in the halls, at the entrances and exits, in the cafeteria, at school assemblies, to reinforce the rules and climate of the school. Interestingly, Haynes avoided a legalistic codification of specific rules but, instead, based discipline on his own personal authority and stature and constantly reinforced discipline by in-person teaching and exhortations. As part of discipline—or, more accurately, as the "soul" of discipline—the principal emphasized manners and spent a good deal of time teaching good manners. A master at using time effectively, Haynes thought that the "principal's use of time separates the exceptional school from the unexceptional school."[14] This skill at organizing time enabled him to give teachers and students a sense of his omnipresence in the building while he still performed all his administrative and public relations functions. Haynes accomplished one of his major purposes, freeing teachers to teach, by assigning monitoring of halls, the school grounds, and the cafeteria to himself

and his assistant principal. Finally, the principal spent very little time on direct observation or evaluation of teaching but concentrated his efforts in that area on screening and interviewing teachers for vacancies. Otherwise, teachers were left to their own devices in the classrooms.

Washington Park's principal did not exhibit a specific overall instructional philosophy--or at least the research did not comment on it. The school was benefitting from a system-wide emphasis on reading, mathematics, and homework, which the principal and teaching staff wholeheartedly endorsed. But at Washington Park the researchers attributed the success of the system's emphases to the principal's determined enthusiasm and the high expectations put on the students by an equally enthusiastic teaching staff.

In Chicago, the Leif Ericson Elementary School had a student body of 885 children in grades K-8 of whom 99 percent were black and 66 percent came from low-income families. Located in the poorest district in Chicago, the school gained a reputation for tight organization and supervision over a five-year period starting with the advent of a new principal, Marjorie Branch. Although the school had not reached the point where all children were reading at grade level, progress in reading was occurring.

The researchers identified approximately seven reasons for Branch's success: 1) she actively supervised the teachers and invested time and effort in staff development; 2) she was highly visible during the school day; 3) she established strict standards concerning tardiness and the wearing of appropriate dress; 4) she demanded lesson plans from teachers and evaluated both the plans and the teachers themselves closely; 5) she made teachers responsible for student achievement; 6) she closed the school campus to outside visitors and required students to stay on campus throughout the school day. Finally, she instituted a Continuous Progress/Mastery Learning Structure for the curriculum whereby learning objectives were specified and student mastery of each objective had to be achieved before the student proceeded to the next objective.

The other overarching element that contributed to the success of the school was the family-type atmosphere of intimacy fostered by the principal and staff as symbolized by their informal motto: "We are Parents too." With so many of the children coming from circumstances of poverty that were presumably coupled with the predictable social and family problems associated with poverty, the adults at the school set about to provide a serious, stabilizing influence for the students.

In Gary, Indiana, a research team visited Banneker Individualized Curriculum Center, a public elementary school where reading and math scores went from the lowest in the city to the highest. The percentage of the student body that come from indigent families declined from 50 percent to 18 percent over a period of five years, a significant fact that may account for the improvement in test scores although the researchers present somewhat persuasive analyses of why they think it did not.

The academic success of Banneker could be divided into two periods, the first of which was a radical decision by the school system to contract for the operation of Banneker with a private corporation that would guarantee month-to-month progress in reading and math. The contract lasted only three years and was beset by various kinds of difficulties, caused primarily by the teachers' union, from the beginning. Such problems were symptomatic of the main liability of the terms of the contract, namely, that the company contracting to operate the school did not have complete control over the school and its staff. Nevertheless, all concerned agreed that the three-year experience had permanent good effects on the school because it taught the administration and teaching staff how to develop, implement, and maintain an instructional system based on the strict commitment of the school to being held accountable for academic performance of the children.

Replacing the company contract was Competencies I, an individualized, comprehensive curriculum designed to make instruction systematic, the staff accountable, and featuring ceaseless checking and rechecking of student

progress. Its obvious similarities to the educational goals of the contract—which also was an individualized curriculum—provided a continuity of themes for Banneker. Overall it seemed to the research team that three elements made Banneker an exceptional school. First, the team decided that the school's exceptionality was a result of its curriculum—a conclusion unusual in these case studies. Second was a usual conclusion: the principal (post-contract). She was the leader of the school, she visited classes often, she kept close watch on student achievement, and she established and maintained a firm tone of and procedures for discipline. Lastly, the climate of the school was family-like: parents enthusiastically supported the school and the school supported the parents by, among other things, encouraging parents to visit the school at any time, and showing parents what they could do on their own to improve the achievement of their children. The entire staff thought of itself as a family. Among the most important members of the staff were the head cook, the security guard, and the maintenance supervisor, all of whom took a personal interest in the children by, for example, teaching table manners, supervising, and disciplining the children when they noticed infractions of school rules. Additionally, the student population had become smaller and the school found that the decrease in enrollment coincided with the increase in achievement.

School Number Two (grades K-6) in Indianapolis was a small, inner-city elementary school set in an integrated neighborhood (35 percent black) whose student body was largely eligible for federal Chapter I compensatory education funds. The research team decided to investigate Number Two because it met their definition of an exceptional school: the school had improved or maintained achievement over a four-year period. More important than any other factor identified by the team as responsible for the school's success was—again—the principal. As a manager, she always made her objectives clear, filtered away unnecessary interruptions from the teachers, and always kept the staff informed by frequent meetings. She had high expecta-

tions for herself, the teachers, and the children, and she gave instruction top priority. She treated her teachers in a highly professional manner. Disciplined herself, she supported the teachers in disciplinary matters. Finally, she took a personal interest in the staff and their families and fostered a cohesiveness and sense of belonging at the school. Besides the principal, the research team considered the remedial reading program very important, and they also thought crucial the activities of the community aide who encouraged parents to take an active role in guiding their children to greater academic achievement.

Mary French Elementary School (K-6) in Decatur, Illinois, a blue collar town, enrolled a student population of 375 children of whom 42 percent were black and 26 percent qualified for federally subsidized lunches. Additionally, the trend in the student population was to lower SES levels. The research team that visited Mary French identified this school as one where student academic performance was at or above the district average over a five-year period. This achievement level was true for the whole school, for the minority segment of the school, and for the lowest-achieving quartile of the student body. The causes of the school's success, the team thought, were the school-wide stress on basic skills, the shared commitment of the faculty and administration, high expectations for the students and consequent demands upon them, detailed structuring of instructional time, and an open-door policy for parents. The principal was considered something of a maverick and was not afraid to take on the system for the sake of some end she found important. Lastly, Mary French was an object of affection in the community. It was regarded by all as a "neighborhood school." To the students, faculty, and community, an important event in the history of the school had been the recent possibility that the school would be closed. Instead, the school was remodeled and another school was consolidated into it. Seemingly, this had focused the attention of everyone on the school and united them in affection and respect for it.

The student population at West Vigo Elementary School

in West Terre Haute, Indiana was all-white, and 35 percent of the students qualified for federal lunch programs. West Vigo enrolled 623 students in grades K-5.

Over a seven-year period encompassing the tenure of two principals, this new school, formed from the consolidation of three other elementary schools, threw in its lot with "affective" education. "There was a concerted effort to instill a feeling of worth in each individual student and to make every effort to praise accomplishments, while de-emphasizing failures,"[15] reported the researchers. This pedagogical strategy was very specifically implemented in the reading program that the school called EAS (Enjoyment; Affective; Skills) which included detailed goals and subgoals in Enjoyment and Affective plus a more traditional scheme of performance objectives in the Skills area. The researchers attributed some evidence of improvement in reading to the EAS program but did not consider whether the improvement was linked to the entire program or individual components of it.

Besides the EAS program and the schoolwide emphasis on "affective dimensions," the research team thought that the physical move into a new building was a morale-building event for students and teachers and that two "dynamic leadership personalities"[16] as principals, one of whom particularly emphasized parental relations, were the other important factors in the success of the school.

In Fort Wayne, Indiana, the L. C. Ward Elementary School (K-6) enrolled 426 students of whom 48 percent qualified for compensatory education assistance and of whom 75 percent were black and 16 percent white. The research team concluded: "The appointment of a new principal, the assignment of five different teachers in the fall of 1975, and the gradual stabilization of the neighborhood set the stage for the emergence of an exceptional urban school program."[17] The new principal improved communication with the staff, enforced discipline, motivated students with "school spirit" and awards events, and encouraged parents to be involved in and feel welcome at the school. With an emphasis on reading and math, Ward students seemed to

have exceeded the normal expectations for inner-city minority children—although the researchers would only say that the students "generally appear"[18] to be achieving at a higher level than many urban school students. Lastly, a threatened school closing was a "critical incident" that brought staff, teachers, parents and the community together through working for a common objective.

What Makes An Effective School?

In 1979 the National Institute of Education and the Institute for Educational Leadership, a private foundation, joined to cosponsor the Journalism Research Fellowships,[19] a project that commissioned six experienced education reporters to report on unusually effective schools in their states. Janet Kolodzy of the *Arkansas Democrat* used the case study method exclusively, and her series on seven high schools is summarized below. For each school, the single most prominent reason for success, as interpreted from Kolodzy's articles, will be listed.

Garland High School, of Garland, Arkansas, a small farming community, enrolled only seventy-four students of whom 90 percent were black. Garland was facing consolidation into another school. But the school had received an "A" rating in the state's accreditation process. Everyone in the community agreed that any success the school had attained was due, to a large extent, to the school's small size "because teachers can spend more time with each child."[20] Another virtue of smallness was that "parents not only know each teacher personally, they know every student in the school, and almost every parent."[21] The high school in Arkansas City, a tiny town whose economic life was dominated by a single factory, sent 50 percent of its small graduating class to college each year. Again, the liabilities of smallness were compensated for by the virtues of smallness: "Parents feel it can offer students individual attention from teachers, a sense of belonging and participation, and a good atmosphere for learning."[22] Students reported that there was a "greater sense of cooperation."[23]

Students in the high school in Russellville, a small,

middle-class town, did *not* excel although everyone thought that they should. Revenues from the construction and operation of a nuclear power plant in the area enabled the town to quintuple its per-pupil expenditures over a ten-year period so that the high school had facilities and a curriculum that "many Arkansas high school principals only dream of."[24] But the school did not have the spark of purpose and ambition for excellence exhibited in the descriptions of other schools in these pages. Kolodzy quoted the school superintendent who, speaking about Russellville, said that "money helps, but it takes more. It takes dedication, enthusiasm."[25] The same problem seemed to be influential at Walnut Ridge High School where a general apathy and indifference to learning may have been caused, according to the school's guidance counselor, by a loss of "parental concern and cooperation."[26]

The success of Little Rock's Catholic High School, one of the leading academic high schools in the state, could be attributed to the clear purpose of its principal who had been at the school thirty years, extremely strong involvement by parents, its climate of respect and discipline, and its emphasis on academics. Over a four-year period, the public high school in Arkadelphia, a college town, had been under the leadership of three principals, each with a different approach to school management, discipline and staffing. The school had apparently been able to maintain its overall academic performance because of an experienced faculty and because such a sizable percentage of the student body came from homes of highly-educated parents associated with the college.

The public high school in Greenwood, a small farming and suburban community, had no discipline problems and seemed to be successful because of its small size, its ability to attract good teachers, and its location in a "family-oriented, religious community."[27]

Making Schools Work

Robert Benjamin, a reporter for the *Cincinnati Post*, expanded his original Institute for Educational Leadership

fellowship into a book, *Making Schools Work*,[28] which was published in 1981. Benjamin set out to find examples of inner-city public schools in which "the children of the urban poor" were learning more than the nationwide averages on achievement tests said they should.

Fifty percent of the children attending school at the Beasley Academic Center in Chicago resided across the street in a sixteen-building, 4000-unit public housing complex where life was so dangerous that even the police would not enter. Placing a showcase academic program in what would otherwise have been a forlorn ghetto elementary school was the idea of the district superintendent, Alice Blair, who said that her "biggest job has been getting teachers and principals to believe all kids can learn. I didn't want them sitting around talking about the socio-economic situation of the children, what they had for breakfast and all that. I wanted them to know the skills they were to teach and to give the kids a lot of practice in those skills."[29] When Blair became superintendent, she instituted a district-wide emphasis on basic skills, including prescribing textbooks, discipline and dress code, nightly homework, phonics, and reading standards for promotion to high school. Additionally, she required parents to sign a contract indicating their support of her program. Still Blair was not satisfied. She wanted an individual school to serve as her flagship and proof that all students can learn. Exhibiting adroit political skills, she cajoled, begged, persuaded, and argued with her superiors in the Chicago public school system for what was in essence a chance to have a de-regulated school. As Benjamin reported: "What counted was a greater-than-normal degree of control over who would work there."[30] Blair thought that the principal was the key to a school's success. She wanted a principal who would be very visible to the student body and the staff, would be a frequent visitor to classes, and was a keen evaluator of teachers. Having found the kind of person she was looking for, she gave him the opportunity to handpick two-thirds of his teachers—double the number the normal principal was allowed to pick. Finally, Blair invited the best students from around the district to apply to Beasley—a selectivity factor that, it

must be admitted, considerably colors the whole undertaking.

What resulted was an almost completely black school with a long waiting list that included whites, the top attendance rate in the Chicago school system, a contented and excellent teaching staff, and a school with every grade exceeding the local and national average test scores. In summarizing the accomplishment, Blair said: "My idea was that, if you could take a certain kind of principal committed to basic education, as many outstanding teachers as you could find and some parental involvement, then you could create an outstanding school—no matter where it was."[31]

Benjamin visited the Garrison School in the notorious "Fort Apache" area of the South Bronx where one-third of the population were on welfare, where hundreds of acres of buildings were in ruins, and where crime and drugs were rampant. The human and material devastation was everywhere—except at the Garrison School where it was not permitted by the heroic efforts of Garrison's principal, Carol Russo. Through her efforts, this school, where half the student population was black and half Hispanic, had reading scores meeting or exceeding normal achievement standards—the only school accomplishing that feat in a district where the average scores of most of the other sixteen elementary schools were in the bottom 20 percent.

Russo, Benjamin reported, had two qualities that seemed to define her success: she was a self-described "political animal," and she was prodigiously organized. Russo realized that the social environment in which Garrison School found itself must be dealt with or it would overcome the school. So whereas other principals shied away from the constant attention that bureaucrats, politicians, and the political system require, Russo was able to have her school building renovated regularly, get burned-out buildings adjacent to the school torn down, direct social services and resources to needy students and their families, and rid the school of incompetent teachers while replacing them with handpicked successors.

With a great capacity for planning and detail, Russo had

the school day and a very complex, multi-tracked, multi-faceted curriculum that emphasized reading organized and running like a fine clock. "She takes everything seriously to the nth degree . . . She is very demanding,"[32] a colleague told Benjamin. "Structure," Russo said, "It's very, very important."[33] Interestingly enough, she did not regard herself primarily as an instructional leader but as an institutional leader. Benjamin concluded that her success was the result of "frequent testing, a lot of communication, and Mrs. Russo's planning and will."[34] Russo might implicitly have summed up her success with more insight when she said that Garrison was "my baby,"[35] for the totality of her devotion to the children, their families, the neighborhood and the school coupled with her attention to the smallest details seemed quite like the compelling, instinctive love of a mother for her baby.

Benjamin's visit to the Edison School in Madison Heights, Michigan, in 1979 was of particular interest. He went there to report on the decline in achievement at one of the exemplary, high-achieving schools (White A) visited by Brookover and his team in 1975. At that time, Brookover identified a school where the principal was an instructional leader and highly visible in the school, where there were high expectations for academic success for all students, where students and teachers worked hard, and where there was active support from the community. Four years later, Benjamin found a complete change in the school—although it had the same principal. But the principal had changed his educational philosophy. Having grown "disillusioned" with the basic skills emphasis that he had put into place, the principal had adopted a "more humanistic approach" to education that emphasized the "affective domain" rather than academic achievement.

Benjamin's account of his visit to the Byck School in Louisville, Kentucky was his most intriguing chapter. Here was a school with a strong leader, a reputation as Louisville's best inner-city elementary school, and about which students and parents were very enthusiastic.

In the early 1970's Byck's student body was almost en-

tirely black, its curriculum was highly structured, the academic achievement of its students was improving at their grade levels, and their student body achievement exceeded that of all other Louisville inner-city schools. In 1975, court-ordered school busing changed Byck's enrollment from 100 percent black to predominantly white. Byck's principal proved to be a human relations genius amidst the consequent difficulties and anxieties of teachers, parents, and students. When dozens of parents followed their children to school on the first day of busing, Byck's principal invited them in and asked them if they were willing to help out. With the principal leading the way, and with the collaboration of the entire school staff including guidance counselors and maintenance men, the principal established Byck as a school that made the concerns and problems of parents, students, and the community its own concerns and problems. The result was a school that all parents, black and white, high- and low-income, valued deeply.

Yet, this human relations triumph seemed to have obscured some academic problems. Unlike other effective schools, Byck's success with low-income and minority students was arguably deficient. Academic achievement for the school as a whole was comparatively high, but a careful scrutiny by Benjamin revealed that the middle-class children were doing well but that lower-income children, white and black, were not reading at grade level. Furthermore, the principal had abdicated the job as instructional leader to an instructional coordinator and was not even very much involved with instruction but, instead, occupied himself with community and school-system relations. This left the instructional coordinator in the position of being the only administrator who was aware of the quality of the jobs the teachers were doing but who was without the authority to evaluate them. Lastly, the school had no overall commitment to rigor and accomplishment in the basic skills, and close step-by-step attention to student progress. Benjamin saw a school with a strong sense of togetherness and community with little strife and few problems but no real academic accomplishments. He aptly titled his chapter about Byck, "The Limit of Human Relations."

Conclusion

The three most important characteristics of effective schools seem to be discipline, leadership, and structured attention to the basic skills. Of the three, discipline is omnipresent. This chapter contains no example of an effective, permissive school. The major finding of effective schools research has sounded the death-knell of the permissive era in education.

Nearly every school described here had a principal who was a strong leader. Those schools where the role of the principal did not seem absolutely critical received leadership from elsewhere, usually from the next highest level of authority, the superintendent. It might even be said that those schools that operated with the kind of super-structured curricular materials that minimize the influence of teachers got a strong sense of direction, that is to say, of leadership, from those materials. Whatever the source of leadership, the effective schools were headed in a definite direction. The few examples of ineffective schools included here were characterized by a lack of, or recent loss of, direction. So necessary does leadership seem to a productive school that even though Black B had a principal who strongly emphasized academics, Brookover was still critical of her for not igniting the fire of determination and a sense of mission at her school.

Despite the necessity of leadership, usually supplied by the principal, it cannot be said that any particular style of leadership predominated. These pages have included descriptions of successful principals who both did and did not take a strong hand in the curriculum, instructional activities, and instructional philosophy; who tried to free teachers from administrative chores to allow them to concentrate on instruction and who, in contrast, involved teachers in administration and discipline in order to foster a sense of community at their schools; who visited classes often and who visited them seldom.

Despite this plurality of styles, the one seemingly necessary detail of leadership is to instill in the school staff a sense that the school day matters, that the hours spent in

school can effect improvements in the lives of the students, and that the school staff must take personal responsibility for the academic progress of the children and be personally insulted if the students do not progress. This spirit is aptly expressed by a first grade teacher at Washington Park Elementary School: "We demand more from the children. We expect them to do well. We know they're going to do well. And they will do well!"[36] Through singular dedication, individual teachers might have this spirit, but it seems inevitably the duty of the principal to require it as a condition of employment. Overall, it seems that a school's leader must create and nurture a pervasive sense of worthwhileness, that is to say simply, a sense that attendance at school is a worthwhile way to spend one's time.

A structured attention to the basic skills is the third prominent characteristic of effective schools. Children will not learn the basic academic skills of reading and counting without an explicit decision that this is the mission of their schools. Such a decision, of course, requires as a precondition a conviction about the fundamental purpose of a school. Effective schools research seems to say that good academic results are coming from schools that are not confused about what to teach and why to teach it. Additionally, the teaching of the basics requires a detailed and structured pedagogical strategy that includes intermediate goals, continuous diagnosis and testing, and remediation. Without a high percentage of the school day being spent in engaged time learning the basics, the basics will not be learned. The effective school is the school organized to promote this engagement.

In closing, some caveats are in order. First, despite the inclusion in these pages of the Kolodzy writings about a wide variety of schools, the student populations at the schools that have been studied by effective school researchers come almost exclusively from low-income, minority families. Additionally, the studies are of elementary schools predominantly. A scientific view demands, therefore, that any conclusions drawn from this research be confined to discussions of those schools, and this is so despite the

unavoidable tendency to view discipline and leadership as obvious school virtues at any level. Second, too much effective schools research, including some of the works reviewed here, is excessively impressionistic and not rigorous enough in the collection and analysis of hard statistics on the schools being studied. Schools which seem to be unusually effective in teaching low-income, minority children may, upon a closer look, be schools located in neighborhoods that are in transition from working class to middle class. Such a transition might account for the observed improvement in academic achievement. Third, the fundamental relationship of cause to effect is not always obvious. For example, is discipline a cause of effectiveness, or is some other cause of effectiveness (a strong principal, e.g.) the cause of discipline? Fourth, can the specific strengths of a particular school be applied to other schools? In other words, can the virtues of Carol Russo, Roger Haynes, and Alice Blair be duplicated elsewhere, or are they inextricably tied to the people who make those schools what they are?

Nevertheless, the great contribution of effective schools research is that it has confirmed the importance of the moral and spiritual climate prevailing at a school. In the past, research comparing schools and the performance of schools has emphasized comparisons of "quantitative" matters such as comparative average expenditures per student; the size, cost, and age of buildings; and the sizes of tax bases. Effective schools research has focused attention on "qualitative" matters such as the excellence of the principal's leadership, the sense of group agreement on a common goal, the belief in the importance of academics, discipline, and a family-like school atmosphere.

The example of Carol Russo in the South Bronx is convincing. No salary increase could persuade most people to take on such a job. Millions of tax dollars for education improvement and for urban development seem paltry in the face of such chaos. But in this worst of all possible urban worlds, a school succeeded because one woman regarded it as "my baby."

Notes

1. State superintendent of schools, Roy Truby, in "*Pauley v. Bailey and the West Virginia Master Plan*," Roy Truby, *Phi Delta Kappan*, December 1983, p. 285.
2. *State Programs of School Improvement: A 50-State Survey*, (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 1983).
3. Socio-Economic Status—normally defined to mean family income plus parental education.
4. See Stuart C. Purkey and Marshall S. Smith, "Effective Schools: A Review," *Elementary School Journal*, March 1983, pp. 427-52.
5. George Weber, "Inner City Children Can Be Taught To Read: Four Successful Schools," Council for Basic Education, Occasional Papers Number Eighteen, 725 15th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20005.
6. Ibid., p. 18.
7. Ibid., p. 19.
8. Ibid., p. 20.
9. Ibid., p. 24.
10. Ibid., p. 22.
11. Wilbur Brookover with Charles Beady, Patricia Flood, John Schweitzer, Joe Wisenbaker, *School Social Systems and Student Achievement*, (New York: Praeger, 1979).
12. Ibid., p. 80.
13. Phi Delta Kappa, *Why Do Some Urban Schools Succeed?*, (Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa, 1980).
14. Ibid., p. 92.
15. Ibid., p. 48.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 53.
18. Ibid., p. 56.
19. *The Journalism Research Fellowships Report: What Makes An Effective School?* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership 1980).
20. Ibid., p. 3.
21. Ibid., pp. 3-4.
22. Ibid., p. 5.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., p. 6.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p. 8.
27. Ibid., p. 9.
28. Robert Benjamin, *Making Schools Work*, (N.Y.: Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1981).
29. Ibid., p. 19.
30. Ibid., p. 20.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., p. 111.

33. Ibid., p. 109.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., p. 108.
36. Phi Delta Kappa, *Why Do Some Urban Schools Succeed?*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, 1980).